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SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
FOR THE ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Education.

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Abstract

The purpose of this capstone is to provide social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies for educational professionals to use with high-school students in the alternative high school. Included in this capstone is a detailed description of SEL as well as an analysis of the need for SEL offering in alternative high schools. The project provides three succinct strategies that educators and professionals can implement within an alternative education setting to best support the high needs of their students. Adapted from Nancy Hellander Pung's UpCoaching framework, the three strategies focus on deepening questions that allow students to realize their values, their intentions, and aid them in goal setting and conflict resolution. The strategies are framed around these three questions: 1) What is your goal?; 2) What will that give you?; 3) What can you do to achieve that goal? Within conversations with a student, the educator would continue to ask deepening questions to unveil the student's values and ultimate intentions. This process can incorporate all five of the SEL competencies as described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2017): social-awareness, self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. There is yet to be sufficient evidence of their effectiveness due to the lack of extensive data. Given that the implementation of these strategies rely highly on both buy-in from education professionals as well as students, results will vary.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This capstone explores the tools for social-emotional learning (SEL) to use with high-school students in alternative education. I wanted to find out the most effective methods and strategies for improving their social-emotional skill set in order to provide more resources/information to educators who struggle to meet the special needs of high-school students attending alternative learning schools. My research question was: *How can alternative education teachers meet the social-emotional needs in an alternative program?* I chose three strategies for implementation that can be used throughout the alternative setting to effectively manage behavior.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is “the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, 2018, para. 1). As is discussed in detail in Chapter One, there appears to be a significant lack of these skills in today’s teenagers due to a myriad of reasons.

Chapter One discusses my personal and career paths that led me to be interested in SEL. Then, it will give an overview of the stakeholders impacted by the lack of SEL skills and provide a preview of what is to come in Chapters Two and Three.

Personal Background

Several roads in my life have led me to focus on social-emotional learning for this project. If I were to take it back to the beginning, I would have to point out that I was brought up on Oprah. As a child, I used to watch episode after episode of Oprah with my mom and listen to the powerful stories of people’s resiliency and triumphs. True empaths, my mother and I

connected with people we would have never met and always seemed to gravitate towards lives and stories that differed from ours. I saw such beauty and love in the way that Oprah helped these guests navigate their difficulties. I learned how their personal lives were affecting their mindset, their jobs, and their overall health. I learned very early on what it takes for a person to be whole and successful. As I matured, my eyes were opened to just how many people have giant obstacles in their way before success can be achieved and many of them were not given guidance as to how to overcome those obstacles.

My mom, again, gave me the first glimpse of just how powerful it can be to make a difference in a student's life. She used to substitute teach, and one day, a middle-school boy told her it was his 14th birthday. She asked how he was celebrating it and he admitted he was not; in fact, he said he had never had a birthday cake. The next day, my mom came to school with a birthday cake made especially for him. She and the boy formed a special relationship during her time substitute teaching and they ended up staying in touch. Over the years, she continually checked in on him and provided him with tools and strategies as to how to do it on his own. He was just 14 when they met and they recently celebrated his 40th birthday. He was a special needs kid who has been able to work at a steady job, buy a car, and house, and even a fishing boat. She provided him with the emotional support that he needed, and because of it, he was able to be successful.

When I started substitute- teaching, I kept being called to the alternative schools. At the time, I figured this was because it was a less than desirable environment for most new teachers to be placed. While that may be true, I also believe that there was a divine intervention bringing me toward working within this environment with these particular students. The alternative realm is

not where I thought my teaching career would take me. In high school, I was very involved. Like most people, I thought alternative schools were for the naughty kids and never had any desire to be there. However, when I began to get to know these kids individually and hear their stories, all of the events in my life started to come together. I was being called to work with students who needed a positive role model and mentor who would support their varying needs. I knew that I would do a great job of supporting their social-emotional needs in addition to guiding them in language arts. I soon realized that I had found my calling and have been teaching in the alternative schools now for 12 years.

Career Impact

While most of my colleagues over the years have had a great understanding of the high needs of students in alternative settings, in my experience, there has yet to be a universal curriculum or toolkit that educators can follow to provide strategies for social-emotional learning for this population. This may be especially detrimental to new teachers in alternative programs. New teachers leave college with training on educational frameworks, curriculum planning, and content knowledge, and may not be given toolkits on serving the whole student. In fact, a recent national survey found that “although four out of 5 teachers are interested in SEL professional learning, only 55 percent have received it” (Frezza, 2018, para. 8). Nowhere in my undergraduate education did we speak to the outside issues surrounding our students and how we can best support them in the classroom. A 2019 *Education Week* article regarding SEL noted, “Colleges of education have been slow to embrace the teaching of social-emotional learning as part of their core curricula for prospective teachers” (Schwartz, para. 5). In the past, conversations about social-emotional learning may have been reserved for the school counselor.

However, due to the high needs of today's students, I argue that it is imperative that we teach SEL skills within our classrooms.

Rationale

Today's teenager is much different than they were in the past. A number of factors have contributed to this change. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues may be caused by the breakdown of the family structure in our society. According to a study by Ramin Mojtabai, a professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the odds of adolescents suffering from clinical depression grew by 37 percent between 2005 and 2014 (Schrobsdorff, 2016). Many psychologists point to the rise in divorce and decline of the family unit; in fact, in the national survey of child and adolescent mental health, children and young people with emotional disorders were almost twice as likely to be living with one parent as opposed to two (CDC, 2019). Additionally, there may be a growing focus of individualism in our society and the notion that it takes a village to raise a family may have shifted paradigm to 'tending to one's own family.' This is a problem when we are attempting to create interconnectivity in our school cultures. As Beres writes:

Individualist cultures tend to conceive of people as self-directed and autonomous, and they tend to prioritize independence and uniqueness as cultural values. Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, tend to see people as connected with others and embedded in a broader social context- as such, they tend to emphasize interdependence, family relationships, and social conformity. (Beres, 2017, para. 7).

Furthermore, in my experience, parents are also becoming increasingly protective of their children. Many educators with whom I work will say that early on in their career, parents never

took the side of the student, but sought advice and counsel from teachers. Now they often experience defensive parents who tell teachers to mind their own business and insist their child did nothing wrong. When adults are not modeling a trusting and collaborative environment, students end up mirroring that. There is a lack of togetherness that there once was and it is affecting children's ability to cope. When communities and families are not accustomed to working together and ensuring what is best for our children, it may contribute to the lack of caution society takes in considering what foods and products are safest for our children as well.

Chemicals in our environment have been proven to alter hormones, often causing boys especially to have hormonal imbalances. Most plastics leach hormone-like chemicals and can significantly affect the way we feel and behave, namely in adolescence when hormones are rampant (NPR, 2011). CertiChem, a testing company, founded by Bittner, found that more than 70% of the products they tested from stores like Whole Foods and Walmart released chemicals that acted like Estrogen (NPR, 2011). What does this mean for adolescent males? Males who have a hormonal imbalance can have a shift in energy levels, problems with growth and development, and issues responding to surroundings, stress, and injury (NIEHS, 2010). This undoubtedly could affect their behavior within the classroom. In addition to adverse effects from the integration of more chemicals in society, technological advances also may be contributing to changes in adolescent mental and physical health.

Technology has introduced a variety of new issues affecting teenagers. Students are not only subject to bullying at school but are now also vulnerable to being tormented in the virtual world via social media. According to the 2017 School Crime Supplement, 15% of the students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied during the school year were bullied online or by text

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, para. 8). Technology may cause students to be more isolated and feel anxious when placed in situations that require interaction at school. In the Communication Theory & Practice course which I teach, we discuss this very phenomenon. My students openly admit that they feel more comfortable texting than they do talking with students face to face. The vast majority refuse to conduct speeches or presentations in front of the class and have gone to great lengths to obtain a 504 plan, which provides special accommodations, so that they may be excused from speeches. In fact, the number of students on 504s and IEPs has risen significantly over the years as have Major Depressive Episodes (MDEs) among adolescents (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018). We are seeing a rise in mental health issues and may not be equipped with how to best handle them.

Stakeholders

As you can imagine, many stakeholders would benefit from a study that would collect the best strategies for social-emotional learning. School administrators' and counselors' time may be currently stretched very thin; they are dealing with a high number of student incidents that they have to sift through in order to get to the root of the issue. That takes a lot of time out of their day and it is constant. They debrief with students, check-in with teachers who have information about the incident, and make phone calls home or bring parents into the school. In addition to counseling students, counselors are finding that much of their day is dedicated to menial administrative tasks which pulls them away from helping students. "School leaders and social workers say the mental health needs of students are increasing, potentially overburdening school counselors. Social workers and some school leaders say school counselors connect with students, which makes schools safer" (Delaney, 2018, para. 3). Implementing effective social-emotional

learning may drastically decrease the workload of counselors as well as the number of altercations we have in school because it will teach students the necessary skills of decision-making, self-management, and relationship skills. Students with effective SEL training will learn to pause and assess before reacting to another student's behavior. It will also help them better identify their own struggles and how they can best resolve them.

Many teachers argue that they are under an enormous amount of stress due to the increased number of behavioral issues within the classroom. Many of us are equipped with the people/problem-solving skills to handle them in-house, but for some (especially new teachers), they have yet to be taught effective strategies for how to resolve these instances before referring students to the office. As cited earlier, although the vast majority of teachers wish to have SEL training, only slightly more than half are receiving it, thus having an adverse effect on lesson planning and time allotted for feedback on student work. Some teachers argue that they are not able to allocate enough time toward their classroom content on a daily basis; this may be contributed to the amount of time teachers use from prep hour and after school to contacting parents or attending meetings regarding behavioral incidences and concerns about students.

Most parents want the best for their children; however, many are typically dealing with their own issues, such as trauma, unemployment, substance/physical/sexual abuse, divorce, homelessness, poverty and beyond. Educators have the opportunity to not only lessen the burden for these parents but teach their learners strategies that they could then employ within their own families, including conflict resolution. In addition to that, it is important when implementing SEL skills that parents are continually informed of the process. In order to effectively engage students in social-emotional learning, it is helpful for parents to be familiar with these strategies

as well. “To build on the work of schools, families should think about social-emotional learning as an all-day idea — rather than as a strategy to manage a singular stressful behavior or situation” (Shafer, 2018, para. 4). Collaborating with families when teaching our students SEL skills is another essential part of effective implementation.

Lastly, students will gain the most from effective social-emotional learning. Teaching students SEL strategies will give them the power to change their own course without the insertion of an adult. Not only will students benefit from learning SEL strategies in the social context, but they’ll benefit from it academically, too. Students who are educated in environments that promote SEL skills show improved academic success as well as college and career readiness (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2019, para. 1). This, paired with social-emotional growth, is our ultimate goal for students.

Conclusion & Preview

Social-emotional learning puts ownership back on the students. It gives them the tools and strategies to navigate difficult situations on their own preventing others from having to get involved; SEL teaches them skills not only for the school environment but for interacting effectively in the real world. Thus, this project describes and shares three, quick yet poignant, strategies that educators can use to teach students how to effectively solve problems, remain intentional about their values, and avoid confrontation.

Chapter Two will go more deeply into alternative schools, providing the definition, characteristics, purpose, special needs of students, and how/how not we are meeting their needs. I will also revisit the rationale for social-emotional learning, discuss the common components of it and begin to get into strategies. I will end Chapter Two by outlining the three strategies and the

framework I will be using to guide this project, and I will articulate the potential barriers to effective implementation. This project will provide an insight as to how SEL can positively affect student success in school.

CHAPTER TWO

Overview

The purpose of this capstone is to provide social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies for teachers to use with high-school students in the alternative high school realm. The project will provide three succinct strategies that educators and professionals can implement within an alternative education setting to best support the high needs of their students.

This literature review section will be discussing existing research in relation to the research question: *How can alternative education teachers meet the social-emotional needs in an alternative program?* In order to answer this question, it is crucial to understand the purpose of asking this question as well as identify which needs are lacking in order to know how to meet them. The research compiled in this chapter will explain why there is a heightened need for addressing social-emotional learning (SEL) in alternative education. This chapter will be comprised of five main sections with a number of subsections.

The first section will unpack alternative education by discussing how it is defined, its purpose, the issue of the attached negative stigma, as well as its common characteristics. This section will explain why alternative education is a focus for this study due to the greater need for social-emotional learning in its student body. The second section will discuss social-emotional learning (SEL), building upon the definition of SEL from Chapter One, going deeper into the various contributors to the need for SEL which provides value for this study. The subsections for SEL are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the rise in mental health issues, technology inundation, and endocrine disruptors. This section aims to explain why social-emotional learning is more important now than ever before. The third section will introduce potential strategies for

addressing the social-emotional needs of high school students in an alternative learning environment. The fourth subsection focuses on educating teachers and will delve into Knowles' adult learning framework. The fifth and final subsection will anticipate possible barriers to a successful implementation of the project.

Alternative Education

Definition Alternative education is “an educational program or system that is separate from a mainstream educational program or system and that is designed especially for students with academic or behavioral difficulties” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). This is the definition of alternative education in the broadest terms, but there is a myriad of additional factors that make alternative education what it is. According to the Minnesota Department of Education Alternative Learning page (MDE, 2019), “Alternative education is designed for students who are at-risk for academic failure. Instruction is designed to meet individual student learning styles as well as their social and emotional needs” (para. 2). Although instruction in alternative education varies from school to school, the overarching purpose is shared.

Purpose The purpose of alternative education goes far beyond academic needs. Students enroll in alternative schools for a variety of reasons, many of which require extra attention to their social-emotional needs. The National Center for Education Statistics states:

Students are removed from regular schools on an individual and daily basis, for a variety of reasons. Some are removed for disruptive behavior, such as possession of weapons, fighting, disruptive verbal behavior, criminal activity, or the use or distribution of alcohol or drugs (Paglin and Fager, 1997, para. 1). Others are removed for other reasons that put

them at risk of education failures, such as chronic truancy, continual academic failure, teen pregnancy/parenthood, or mental health problems.

This description gives insight into the negative connotations associated with alternative education which is what will be addressed in the following paragraph.

Overcoming the Stigma Alternative education may have received a bad reputation over the years. A universal requirement for enrollment in alternative programs is for students to be behind in credits; because of this, there is a stereotype of a delinquent student that is often associated with alternative education students. Another reason for their bad reputation is because on many occasions when a student is expelled from their high school, they are given the option to remain in the district and attend the alternative school. In addition to that, a high number of alternative students are dealing with issues that have been stigmatized by society, such as mental health issues, addiction, or teen pregnancy. This may have perpetuated the idea that alternative schools are the dumping grounds for badly behaved students.

Characteristics Alternative education in America is typically dated back to the 1960s although the beginning date is unclear. Because the origin is somewhat inconclusive, the intended design and functionality of alternative education are also a bit unclear. Lange and Sletten (2019) noted the following:

Though alternative programs and schools have been in existence for many years, there is still very little consistent, wide-ranging evidence of their effectiveness or even an understanding of their characteristics; yet, many educators believe that alternative education is one important answer to meeting the needs of disenfranchised youth (p. 2).

Alternative educators and administrators are in agreement that these programs are not just beneficial, they are necessary for the vast majority of our learners. Alternative education is just that- an alternative to the traditional setting of high school. Learners come in all styles and not every student is well-matched to the style of the brick & mortar setting. Alternative schools can look different in a number of ways, from scheduling to courses offered to class sizes. The curriculum of alternative education often differs from that of its traditional counterparts as well.

While courses follow state standards, the route in which those standards are met is typically more open-ended; for example, alternative programs can offer a variety of pathways to meet those standards, such as online learning, credit recovery, project-based learning, or traditional seat-based instruction. The purpose of offering a variety of pathways for students is to best meet the individual needs of every student attending (State-Approved Alternative Programs Resource Guide, 2016, p. 1). Alternative education demands crucial programming for the highest-need students to address the potential gaps in their education and their social-emotional needs. The following section will discuss social-emotional learning and the need for it with adolescents, especially within the alternative realm.

Alternative Education Summary Alternative Education is designed to meet the needs of struggling students, whether academically or emotionally, and is a separate entity from mainstream education. Alternative schools are often housed in a separate location from the mainstream high school as a way to provide a unique school culture to best meet the needs of the students. This involves smaller class sizes, more one-on-one time with teachers, and individualized learning plans to best meet the learning styles of each student.

Social-emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning has become a growing focus in education over the past several decades. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social-emotional learning as follows:

the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (2019).

CASEL (2019, Core SEL Competencies, para. 1-5) also outlines five main competencies that make up social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies guide the curriculum planning where SEL skills are integrated.

Self-awareness. This competency is having the ability to recognize one's own thoughts, emotions, beliefs, values, and how they affect their behavior as well as those around them. Some skills associated with self-awareness are being able to identify emotions, having an accurate self-perception, recognizing one's own strengths, and having self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Self-management. This competency refers to regulation; this is the ability to regulate one's own emotions, thoughts, behaviors in a variety of situations. Skills associated with self-management include impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting, and organizational skills.

Social awareness. Developing this skill gives students the ability to take the perspective of others, allows them to practice empathy, and celebrate diversity.

Relationship skills. Creating and maintaining healthy relationships is a skill many of alternative education students struggle with as it is common for these students not to have had this modeled at home. This competency helps students learn healthy communication, social-engagement, relationship-building, and teamwork.

Responsible decision-making. A universal issue for teenagers worldwide, responsible decision-making takes a concerted effort and needs planning and preparation. This competency helps students to identify problems, analyze situations, solve problems, and reflect upon those.

Social-emotional learning teaches the ‘whole-child’ approach. “Within a whole child approach, questions must be raised about school culture and curriculum; instructional strategies and family engagement; critical thinking and social-emotional wellness” (A Whole Child Approach to Education, n.d., para. 2). The traditional educational approach has expanded to include the necessary skills that educators are seeing that has been lacking in today’s students. The following sections will discuss those skills that are lacking and potential reasons as to why.

SEL Rationale

The need is in response to a number of shifts that have developed in our society over the past several decades. The shift can be attributed to the following factors: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the rise in mental health issues, technology inundation, and endocrine disruptors. The following subsections will delve further into each of these contributing factors.

ACEs Over the past few decades, we have learned that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have a tremendous impact on adolescents and affect the potential success of our students. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of

the largest investigations of how childhood abuse and neglect and a variety of household challenges determines a person's physical and emotional health into adulthood (CDC, 2019). The case study was conducted from 1995 to 1997 and found a direct negative correlation between negative childhood experiences and the academic and social skills of its participants. The study found that students who have experienced a number of negative life circumstances are at greater risk for a myriad of adverse effects.

It led to the creation of the ACEs Test, which has participants answer questions as to the number of incidences that would be associated with a rough childhood. The incidences, or hallmarks, of a more difficult childhood, are divided into three sections: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. Within these categories are 10 questions, addressing the following: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, mental illness, incarcerated relative, substance abuse, mother treated violently, and divorce (CDC, 2019). The more a person has encountered these traumas, the higher their ACEs score. The study also developed the Ace Pyramid which outlines the levels of negative results that adverse childhood experiences can bring upon a person (Corwin, 2018).

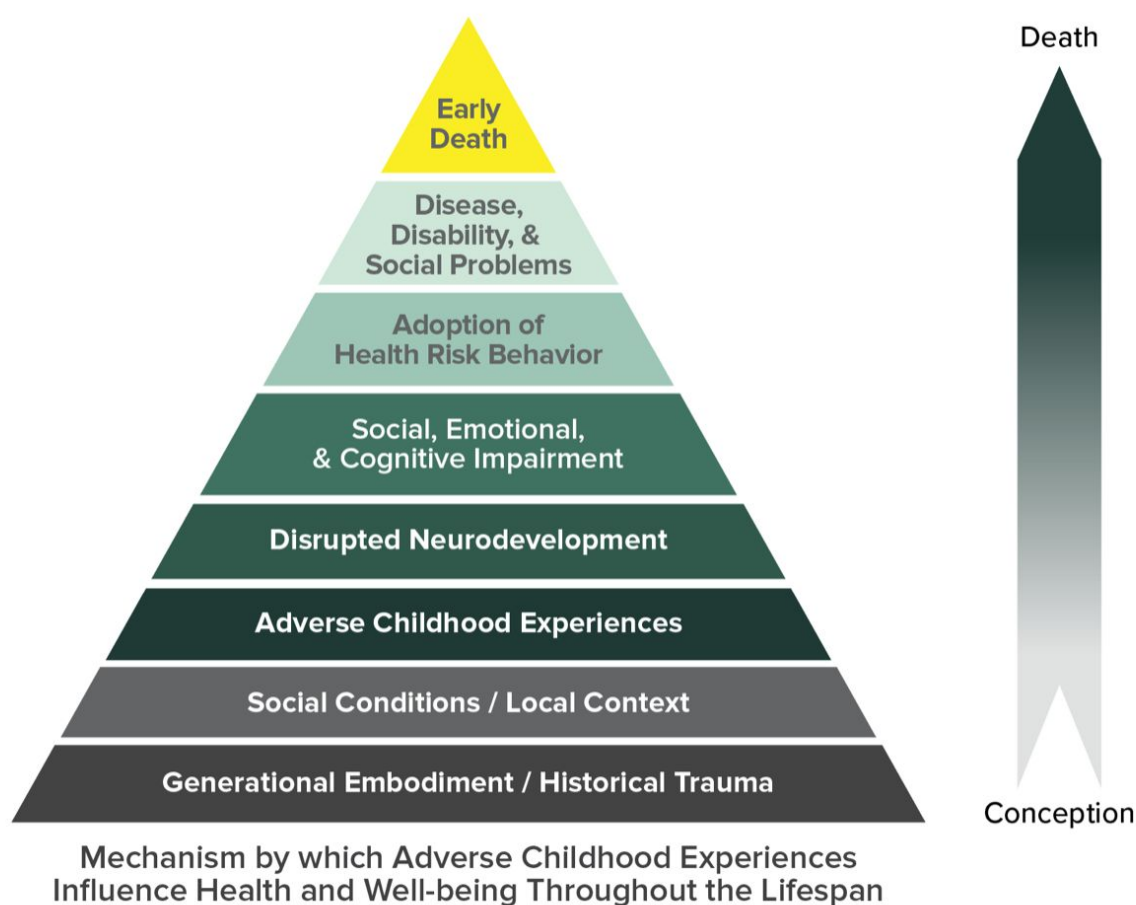


Figure 1. The Ace Pyramid. This figure illustrates the hallmarks in an individual's life that may contribute to adverse effects.

Once a child endures negative experiences, their social, emotional, and cognitive growth is likely to become impaired. As the child grows into adolescence, they may be more prone to dabble in risky behaviors which can result in substance abuse, which is later associated with addiction, head trauma, and death.

Youth with a higher ACE score are more likely to engage in unsafe sex, exposing them to an increased chance of STDs, HIV, teen pregnancy, and fetal death. Teens with adverse childhood experiences are more likely to have PTSD, depression, anxiety, and have an increased

chance of suicide. In addition to these experiences affecting mental health, they have been shown to affect physical health as well; people with adverse childhood experiences are also more prone to have cancer, heart disease, autoimmune disease, liver disease, and suffer from obesity (CDC, 2019). The above discussions address that without addressing the high needs of our students with Adverse Childhood Experiences, academic demands cannot be successfully fulfilled. Educators and administrators alike are realizing the necessity of addressing these needs along with academics.

The Rise in Mental Health Issues Perhaps in a large part due to a rise in ACEs scores, there seems to be a rise in the number of students with mental health issues, particularly anxiety and depression. According to the CDC (2019), children who have ever been diagnosed with either anxiety or depression in ages 6–17 years increased from 5.4% in 2003 to 8% in 2007 and to 8.4% in 2011–2012. Perhaps even more startling is that “1 in 6 U.S. children aged 2–8 years (17.4%) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder” (CDC, 2019, para. 7). Educators may not be properly prepped with tools to teach in a classroom where at least a handful of students are battling a mental illness. Typically, educators are required to obtain one hour of ‘mental health training’ to keep their teaching license current. Mental health problems are on the rise among adolescents and this could be attributed to the rise in technology.

Technology Inundation While technology has improved our society in countless ways, it has also contributed to a number of negative side effects, especially for youth. As the availability and usage of technology have increased, so has the number of students with reported mental health issues. “Between 2008 and 2017, the [number] of adults that experienced serious psychological distress in the last month increased among most age groups, with the largest

increases seen among younger adults aged 18-25 (71%)” (Rosenberg, 2019, para. 3). Many point to Facebook and other social media platforms as contributing to increased anxiety, especially among teens. It should be noted that the number of Facebook users jumped from 1 million in its inaugural year in 2004 to 100 million in 2008 (The Associated Press, 2012). Mental health issues have also increased in recent years. One study found that “48 percent of teens who spend five hours per day on an electronic device has at least one suicide risk factor, compared to 33 percent of teens who spend two hours a day on an electronic device” (Shafer, 2017, para. 6). Although correlation does not equal causation; it is possible that teens who are struggling with their mental health are more prone to disengage through social media rather than the theory that social media causes a decline in mental health. In fact, psychologists have now determined that there is an actual disorder for social media obsession, called ‘social media anxiety disorder.’ According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA, 2018), social media anxiety disorder “can cause depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), impulsive disorder, problems with mental functioning, paranoia, and loneliness” (para. 6). Schools may need to help educate students to use technology appropriately to best support their social-emotional health.

Endocrine Disruptors Another possible factor, which is not discussed widely, is the role that endocrine disruptors may play in the rise of anxiety, depression and other health issues among teens. “Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that may interfere with the body’s endocrine system and produce adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune effects in both humans and wildlife” (NIH, 2019, para. 1). In other words, these chemicals can drastically alter hormones causing an imbalance and innumerable side effects, such as obesity, anxiety, and

depression. Endocrine disruptors can be found in a variety of common things used daily, such as plastics, pesticides, furniture, electronics, meat, and soy. In addition to the known causes of endocrine disruptors, there are many theories as to other negative side effects that they could cause.

ADHD and Autism ADHD and Autism have skyrocketed over the last several decades, and while alternative education differs from special education, it has increased the need for social-emotional learning across the board. The CDC (2019) gives the following statistics on the rampant rise of ADHD:

The percent of children 4-17 years of age ever diagnosed with ADHD had previously increased, from 7.8% in 2003 to 9.5% in 2007 and to 11.0% in 2011-12. ... The number of young children (ages 2-5) who had ADHD at the time of the survey increased by more than 50% from the 2007-2008 survey to the 2011-12 survey (para. 7).

These statistics are startling and have left researchers, doctors, parents, and educators looking in all directions as to the cause. While there has not been a definitive cause yet, many point to endocrine disruptors from the rise of chemicals absorbed by these children as compared to generations past. “There is good reason to suspect that increasing chemical production and use is related to the growing incidence of endocrine-associated pediatric disorders over the past 20 years, including male reproductive problems and neurobehavioral disorders” (Endocrine Society, December 2014, p. 2). If endocrine disruptors do in fact drastically change the chemical make-up of our youth, it is clear that their emotional health will be affected.

SEL Summary

In summary, social-emotional learning needs to be incorporated into our professional development in alternative schools. The world is more complex than it ever was. This generation of teens has been introduced to societal advances that have significantly impacted them, and we have not yet realized the lasting effects of those advances, from technology to chemicals and beyond. In a world where substance abuse, divorce rate, and many other negative experiences have risen, children are being subjected to a number of traumas that affect their social-emotional health. Schools are now adopting a new approach to education to teach the ‘whole-child’ as opposed to simply focusing on academics. Social-emotional learning is a key component of the ‘whole-child’ approach.

Strategies

Alternative education is lacking a highly effective universal SEL toolkit. There is a need for a teacher and student-friendly system that would remind students how to effectively process through issues and solve problems. Students in the alternative school environment need something quick and simple that will ground them in the components of SEL which they’ve been taught and be utilized in a variety of situations. Teachers, counselors, and administrators also need something they can utilize in a short time frame to best expedite problem-solving.

The UpCoaching framework was created in 2006 by Nancy Hellander Pung, adjunct faculty at Hamline University. Pung created this framework as a result of her vast experience in teaching and coaching. For a variety of reasons, this framework would be beneficial to meeting social-emotional needs within the alternative program. The UpCoaching framework is designed to instruct both staff and students on how to navigate social-emotional issues while providing a common language so that a school community can communicate effectively in a timely manner.

Designed to offer questions that allow the student to problem-solve on their own and go deeper into their intention of any given situation, the UpCoaching framework provides simplistic questions that allow student self-discovery. The questions are designed to help students navigate their emotions and actions through intentional goal setting. For the purpose of this capstone, three main strategic strategies will aid in goal setting and serve as a toolkit for educators in SEL implementation. These three strategies are to have the student first define the goal, then consider the purpose of the goal, and finally detail the actions needed to achieve that goal. The first question is, “What is your goal?” This could be asked in a one-on-one conversation surrounding goal setting as well as debriefing a confrontation. The second question is, “What will that give you?” This allows the student to consider their values and what is most important to them. The third and final question of this framework is, “What actions will you take to help you achieve this goal?” This allows the student to consider the steps they need to take in order to fulfill their goal and gives them a plan of action. Staff will first coach the students on working through their goal setting by providing a dialogue with these questions and will eventually allow students to continue taking the steps on their own. The explanation and implementation of these strategies are explained in detail in the appendices.

Summary of Strategies Three strategies were provided to better equip students with SEL in this project. The purpose of these strategies was to allow the student to articulate intentions and ultimate goals while being cognizant of their actions. This was part of a coaching process where staff and students engage in a dialogue to deepen the student’s understanding of both motivation and goal. Since staff will become coaches, they need to be educated on these

strategies as well. The following section explains the framework for which this project was constructed.

Educating Teachers

The research in this capstone was built to design a project that will help educators, administrators, and school support staff. It utilized Knowles andragogy theory to frame the project as that was geared toward helping adults. Andragogy was used to inform leadership teaching because it was “adapted to fit the uniqueness of [adult] learners” (Knowles, Holton, Swanson, 2012, p. 3). Just as there are emerging learners in the student realm, teachers come with a variety of backgrounds and individual learning experiences and require an educational framework that best fits their needs. The Knowles framework took the traditional lecture model of teaching and flipped it to a model where the teachers act more as a guide and facilitator of student learning. This allows students and teachers to be collaborative learners throughout the educational process. In addition, this framework will allow professionals to individualize support in regards to SEL and equip students with the tools to practice using these strategies on their own as well. These strategies will tailor growth specific to each individual student through one-on-one conversations. This approach to teaching will allow professionals to meet the diversifying needs of students in our alternative classrooms.

Educating Teachers Summary Knowles andragogy framework will guide the implementation of the project as it is geared toward educating adults. This framework will allow teachers to be a facilitator in the coaching process as opposed to the traditional lecture model. Because staff will first be trained on the implementation of these strategies before coaching the students, the andragogical framework will be the most effective to utilize for this capstone.

Possible Barriers to Implementation

There are several things to consider in the creation of this project. First, the data to support the effectiveness of these strategies is still being gathered. Because the UpCoaching framework is somewhat new and hasn't been widely adopted, there have not yet been lengthy studies to properly analyze the effectiveness of these practices long-term. This may or may not affect the success of this project implementation as well as the staff buy-in. Without solid data to support the proposed project, there could be collective hesitation from the school community. Secondly, the effectiveness of strategies is largely dependent upon the effectiveness of the school culture. The data is inconclusive as to how and to what degree existing school culture played a role in the effectiveness of any SEL strategies. This is a variable that will not be discussed as it vastly differs from program to program. The final consideration related to school culture is whether or not there will be a teacher/student/school community buy-in. Because SEL is not mandated in the way that state standards are, the buy-in is more subjective and will vary from program to program as well. It is possible that the lack of a requirement of program implementation could negatively affect the number of teachers, administrators, and support staff actually following through with it. The researched effectiveness will not have included these variables.

Possible Barriers to Implementation Summary The main possible barriers to effective implementation of this project are the lack of data to support the effectiveness of these strategies, the fact that the existing school culture will play a prominent role in whether or not the strategies bring success, as well as the needed buy-in from the school community.

Chapter Two Summary

This chapter provided research supporting the heightened need for social-emotional learning in alternative education. Chapter Two explained what alternative education is, its characteristics, purpose, and associated stigma. The chapter also examined the various needs for social-emotional learning and potential causes, such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), rising mental health issues, technology inundation, and endocrine disruptors. Lastly, this chapter explored the possible barriers that may be encountered when presenting this project to the staff.

This capstone is a proposal for a project which will provide educators a toolkit to implement the three strategies discussed above. Chapter Three will further discuss the Knowles Andragogical Framework for educating teachers. It will then give detailed descriptions of the UpCoaching framework and strategies for social-emotional learning and will provide examples of success from the previous implementation. Next, it will detail the audience and setting for the project, give details of the proposed project delivery, and give a description of how the project will be assessed. Finally, Chapter Three will provide a timeline for implementation.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

This project focuses on addressing the need for available strategies for social-emotional learning (SEL) in the alternative high school. The guiding question for this project is: *How can alternative education teachers meet the social-emotional needs in an alternative program?*

Chapter One introduced the topic and explained in detail why the decision for this capstone was made; this was through a combination of various events and circumstances that were substantial in both personal and professional life. Chapter Two defined alternative education, articulated its purpose, discussed the negative stigma that is attached to it, and described its common characteristics. Social-emotional learning (SEL) was defined, its components were outlined, and a thorough rationale as to its importance in the alternative high school setting was given. Chapter Two also gave an introduction to the three UpCoaching Framework strategies that will be used to fulfill SEL needs in this project. Lastly, Knowles' (2012) framework for educating teachers was briefly discussed which will guide the project creation and considered possible barriers educators may encounter to effective implementation. Chapter Three will lay out the plan for the project that was created based on the research in Chapter Two.

This chapter by giving an overview of the project, allowing for a more detailed presentation of the project will be given in the appendices. Within this chapter, there will be a description of the research framework being used to guide the project and highlighted elements that are incorporated from that. The three strategies chosen for this project will be discussed in

detail using the UpCoaching Framework and will provide success stories from a school using this framework will be provided. A detailed explanation of the audience and setting will then be given, discussing in more detail who will be utilizing this project and where it will be used. Lastly, the outline for this process, the assessment of the project, and a timeline for implementation will be provided.

Project Overview

The purpose of this capstone is to provide social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies for teachers to use with high-school students in the alternative high school realm. While a number of potentially effective SEL strategies were uncovered throughout the research, three strategies were chosen based on the variety of ways in which they could be used, the ability to use them on the spot, and the expected effectiveness. Many teachers will agree that when educators are given too many strategies, the practice itself may become ineffective. Therefore, it is important to offer concise, quick, and valuable tools for all staff to use within the alternative high school community.

Project Framework

This project will use Knowles' (2012) andragogical theory as this is geared toward helping adults. As Knowles' second principle states, "the process should start with and build on the backgrounds, needs, interests, problems, and concerns of the participants" (p. 11). As this process began with the deficit of SEL strategies available to educators, administrators, and support staff in the alternative realm, this project is aimed to address this tremendous need.

There are a number of ways in which this framework was followed. Firstly, this project will be a rich resource for each professional that will be utilizing this project as opposed to

something that is merely meant to be built upon, as in pedagogical theory (Knowles, 1998).

Concrete SEL strategies that teachers, administrators, and support staff can use on a daily basis will be provided. Being that these are strategies that can be utilized on a daily basis, they are also self-directed, which Knowles describes as being an important component of andragogical theory.

Secondly, these strategies were developed from real-life issues that are common in an alternative setting. Students constantly need practice in self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, self-awareness, and social awareness. The strategies outlined are geared particularly toward high school students in the alternative setting.

An important element of the andragogical model is that there is a trusting, collaborative atmosphere that fosters respect and support. In addition to that, there needs to be a mutual assessment and negotiation when these strategies are being implemented. In this project, strategies will be provided so that students and staff can work together to determine how to best fit the needs of each individual student. For example, when a student issue arises, the staff will meet with the student one-on-one to discuss the student's goal in solving the issue and what actions they need to take to accomplish it. Another element of the andragogical method is experiential techniques. In this element, educators are given the trust and freedom to experiment with different strategies based upon a variety of situations or individual needs.

The three strategies outlined in this project are adopted from the UpCoaching Framework created by Hamline Professor Nancy Hellander Pung. They are as a series of deepening questions that staff and students use together, and hopefully, students will eventually learn to use on their own. These three strategies are ultimately about the creation and execution of goals which are summarized as follows: (1) define the goal, (2) consider the purpose of the goal, and

(3) detail the actions needed to achieve that goal. These are articulated through a series of questions that are discussed in the following section.

Strategies using UpCoaching Framework

The UpCoaching Framework was created to provide a coaching conversation framework that allows the coachee to arrive at their own decisions through deepening questions. The framework uses the term ‘coaching’ to describe the back and forth individualized process that is necessary to fulfill each person’s SEL needs. In order to fully understanding the purpose of UpCoaching, it is important to look at the objectives of its framework. According to the UpCoaching Framework website, the objectives are as follows (Pung, 2019):

- Equip individuals with core coaching competencies & evidence-based practices to empower others to maximize their potential
- Offer guided practice and a continuous cycle of reflection to increase academic and social-emotional learning outcomes for all children
- Provide a common language, approach, and framework
- A Whole Child Approach (safe, engaged, challenged, supported and healthy kids)
- Ensures Equity- create layers of support
- Amplifies Student, Teacher, Parent Voice
- Highly Flexible- can be used in daily interactions, MTSS as a tiered intervention, classroom management, SOEI
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive- Dr. Hollie

These objectives meet the variety of needs necessary to teach students social-emotional learning in an alternative setting. While the framework provides a variety of strategies to guide students in

a coaching conversation, this project will focus on three strategies for the purpose of a simplistic toolkit that will be straightforward and have a greater likelihood of implementation.

As stated earlier, the three strategies are meant to deepen the questioning process in a coaching conversation to uncover a student's motivation and ultimate goals for their actions. First, the student is asked to define their goal. If the coaching conversation arose from a confrontation involving the student, having the student explain their goal within the confrontation is an essential first step. It allows them to consider what they ultimately wanted out of the situation. If the conversation is about goal setting, this is undoubtedly the first step of the process.

Next, the student is asked to consider what that goal will give them. This allows the student to examine their values. If this is in regards to a confrontation, the student may explain that they wanted respect, validation, or honesty. If this a simple conversation regarding goal setting, such as finding a job, it allows the student to consider what that job would give them, such as more time spent with a hobby, getting their parent's approval, or achieving financial stability.

The final strategy is to ask the student to describe the steps needed to achieve that goal. This step may involve some more coaching on the educator's part. For instance, if the student was in a physical confrontation, he may say that he was ultimately looking for respect because that would give him pride amongst his peers. If he is unable to come up with ways in which he could garner respect without resorting to physical violence, the coach would then offer suggestions as to alternative ways in which he could still achieve his goal without getting into an altercation. This conversation may also go deeper into what respect looks like to him and how

that definition could be redefined. If the student is working on goal-setting, describing the steps needed to achieve that goal is an integral part of its execution and will teach students how important it is to think through the goal-setting process in order for the goal to come to fruition.

UpCoaching Success

While there was not sufficient quantitative data surrounding the success of UpCoaching available, several testimonials from educators and students who have greatly benefitted from UpCoaching implementation were given. Hopkins High School in Minnesota has done extensive work with UpCoaching in recent years.

The following comments were gathered from interviews conducted and showcased on the UpCoaching website (UpCoaching, 2018). World Language teacher, Timothy Owen, stated, “Coaching is just the perfect fit [for improving student success]. If teachers began seeing all of their students as human beings with goals and dreams and enter into that dialogue about their goals and dreams, there is the dialogue that leads to actions that leave our school a much better place to teach and learn” (personal communication, 2018). Karin Johnson, a science teacher at Hopkins, discussed a student’s success story in which the student began owning her behaviors and brought a failing grade to a C. Another student discussed how the strategies from UpCoaching have changed his life dramatically. He went from having a lot of missing work to zero missing work, from barely passing his classes to earn mostly A’s, and he is now a part of a leadership group within his school. As the staff puts it, their school has been transformed because of UpCoaching, positively affecting both academic and social-emotional success.

Audience and Setting

The audience for this project is comprised of educators, administrators, and support staff of alternative learning programs. Depending upon the length of time an educator has been teaching before receiving this project, the information will vary according to their needs. The justification for focusing on SEL needs may or may not be a heightened focus. Veteran educators in the alternative setting will not need as much information as to the rationale of SEL. This will vary from program to program and likely vary from year to year. If there are only a few teachers in the program new to alternative education, most educators would not need the detailed section in the Powerpoint about the various reasons as to why alternative schools specifically need to focus on SEL. In that case, a separate session should be conducted with the new teacher(s) as opposed to the whole group.

As mentioned, every educational professional within an alternative education setting would be part of the project implementation. In true SEL pedagogy, each stakeholder is part of the process, taking ownership in helping to teach the whole child and cultivate these skills. Educators will use the strategies listed in this project within their classrooms or within advisory. The support staff will use these strategies during counseling sessions, student check-ins, and post-graduate planning. Administrators also need to be aware of these strategies and can utilize them when handling disciplinary referrals, when observing teacher-student relations, or when meeting with students one-on-one.

The setting for this project is the alternative high school. Alternative high schools are often a branch of a district's mainstream high school but can also be stand-alone schools or part of a charter. There are several important factors that contribute to these schools to be considered alternative, as further discussed in Chapter Two. One factor is that they are smaller in size than

the average high school and the class sizes are approximately half of the average mainstream high school class; as opposed to 40 students in a mainstream classroom, alternative education classrooms typically have a maximum of 15 students. Another factor of the alternative high school setting is that it typically offers a variety of credit-earning paths, such as seat-based, online, or project-based in order to meet a variety of learning styles. It is also important to note that alternative schools are choice schools, meaning students enroll in these schools by their choice or their family's choice. It is important to note these unique attributes of alternative schools when considering the setting.

Presentation of Project

This project will be delivered to the entire school staff of an alternative education setting as part of its professional development. This will be comprised of two sessions; the first session will be a two hour session in the fall, and the second session will be conducted in a one-hour session in the spring. The first session will be geared toward initial implementation.

Educators, administrators, and support staff will gather during a scheduled time on a professional development day. Each person will receive a printed copy as well as an electronic version of the PowerPoint presentation that will be given and can be found in the appendices. The first part of the session will give all pertinent information, including the rationale for the project, the intended strategies, success stories, and possible scenarios for quick implementation. The second part of the session will consist of role-playing amongst staff members using the strategies proposed.

Project Assessment

This project will be assessed by students, educators, administrators, and support staff within the school community. I will be gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative assessment will be gathered from surveys taken by students, and reflective discussions with staff, support staff, and administrators. Students will analyze the effectiveness of conversations with staff members regarding issues they may have. Staff will reflect upon their own individual growth as well as their assessment of how they feel others are grasping these strategies in their interactions. The quantitative assessment will be comprised of hard data that will be compiled at the second session regarding behavior, attendance, and student grades. The data will be analyzed by all persons participating in the training and the intention will be to find changes or improvements since the implementation. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data will give a clear indication as to the effectiveness of these strategies.

Timeline

Potential SEL strategies for this project have been researched over the past several years, both from collected literature as well as from various conferences and courses through Hamline's Masters of Education program. UpCoaching became part of the research in the summer of 2018 and was obtained through the Leadership course as part of Hamline's MAED. In the summer of 2019, research began to be gathered more formally, with documentation of appropriate articles and creation of an annotated bibliography. This research continued into the fall of 2019 and will complete by the winter of 2019. The project's final revisions will culminate in the spring/summer of 2020 and will be available in the fall of 2020.

Chapter Three Summary

Chapter Three laid out the blueprint for the project. The steps taken were described to answer the research question: *What are the best practices for providing alternative high school students with successful toolkits for SEL?* First, an overview of the project was provided. Then, the research framework chosen to guide the project was discussed. Next, the UpCoaching strategies that will be utilized in this project and examples of that were given. Following that, testimonials from a school utilizing the UpCoaching framework were highlighted. The audience and setting for the project were outlined as well as the delivery of the project itself. Following that was a detailed description of the ways in which this project will be assessed and by whom. Finally, a timeline in which this project will culminate was given.

Chapter Four will go in further detail of the project itself, including which teachers would receive it and how they would implement it. Included in the following chapter will also break down the timing of the project and the necessary information a professional would require before a presentation. Chapter Four will also include the required materials and handouts needed for a professional to implement the proposed strategies going forward.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

Recently I was in a meeting with English Language Arts colleagues discussing potential goals for our Professional Learning Community (PLC). I mentioned that I was studying SEL strategies to improve student success and I was debating how to best incorporate that into my Individual Student Achievement Goal (ISAG). Another educator looked perplexed and paused. Her response was that SEL was too ‘fluffy’ and I should look at something that allowed for hard data. Before I could respond, another colleague pointed out that there is lengthy research as to the purpose and need for SEL which sparked a somewhat contentious conversation among the group. This discussion is exactly why I chose this topic for my capstone. Social-emotional learning is paramount to the betterment of our students and yet the buy-in from educators is not where it needs to be. My hope is that this project will provide educators with both, backed by research rationales for SEL as well as effective strategies that can be implemented to best serve the needs of our students in alternative education.

Over the course of the past twelve years, I have worked as an English teacher in a variety of alternative high schools. My experience has ranged from teaching in urban settings, rural settings, to the suburbs. The demographics of my students and the lifestyles in which they led varied dramatically from place to place, but one thing was consistent; students in alternative education are lacking social-emotional skills.

This capstone was the result of the research question: *How can alternative education teachers meet the social-emotional needs in an alternative program?* This research led to a

discovery of three succinct strategies that can be utilized by any education professional in the high school alternative environment. These strategies are aimed to foster goal setting, conflict resolution, and to aid students in the further development of self-awareness.

Overview

This chapter will be a reflection of my project. It will describe the various setbacks encountered and the ways in which they were navigated. This chapter is also a reflection of the successes experienced and all that was learned throughout this process. Next, Chapter Four revisits the literature review and provides an analysis of the resources. A description of the project will also be given. Finally, I will consider the limitations and implications of the project.

Reflection

This has been a wonderfully humbling process for me. Writing has always been a strength of mine; from a young age, I excelled in it and was the recipient of various writing honors and awards. As an adult, I've spent much of my energy blogging, writing books, and editing. Writing my capstone was an entirely different undertaking, shifting from creative writing to research writing, and I quickly learned where my inclinations lie. This whole process challenged me to step out of my comfort zone and approach writing in an entirely new way. I have improved upon my knowledge of APA formatting as well as synthesizing research. I also practiced the art of previewing material and providing a summary in a way that I hadn't practiced since my undergraduate courses. It has given me a better appreciation for the requirements that I give my own students and the time and thought it takes to compile it all. Being thoughtful in the ways in which research and citations are integrated into a paper was something I had not done

myself in years. It has been a great experience to delve into that once again so I can better empathize with my students as they navigate their own research papers.

In order to overcome the difficulties I had with APA formatting and compiling research, I relied on my professor, colleagues, and peer review partner for help. I also studied capstone examples to find repeating patterns and formatting that better illuminated expectations. Outlines for chapters provided by my course were also extremely helpful to understand what is expected for each. I also found the feedback form completed by my peer reviewer to be very beneficial.

The parts of the capstone that came most naturally to me have been the places where I was able to write about my own personal experiences and reflection. I find this to be a much more organic process than compiling research. The strongest parts of my capstone are the areas in which I was able to describe how my personal and professional experiences led me to choose social-emotional learning as my focus. It was self-affirming to realize how many different aspects of my personal and professional life have led to this decision and made me all the more confident in my chosen focus.

Literature Review

One of the biggest difficulties I encountered in creating this capstone was sifting through the research and deciding upon the three succinct strategies chosen for my project. Once I did, however, the pieces all came together. While there are a number of activities available for teachers to implement in teaching SEL skills, I had yet to find a system that would not require teachers and educational staff to foster SEL on a daily basis with zero preparation. The strategies that I ultimately created fulfill that need. They are the result of ideas and strategies adopted from past experience but mainly from Nancy Hellander Pung's UpCoaching Framework. Although my

staff had training in UpCoaching Framework, implementation was not successful which I have attributed to the time and materials it takes to prepare for implementation. The strategies provided in my project requires practice but alleviates the pressure to print materials and spend time preparing.

Most of the literature in this capstone focuses on the need for SEL as opposed to possible strategies. This was born purely from what was most available but it ultimately led to the way in which my project would be created. Rather than focus on a variety of curriculum that could be offered, I determined that what is most important is for educators and professional staff to gain a greater understanding as to the need of SEL in alternative education and the research that supports it. This is especially important for educators who are new to the alternative teaching realm. Throughout my teaching experience, it became clear that the largest learning curve new teachers have in alternative education is understanding and appreciating the obstacles students face. Providing resources to teachers that will both help them understand those obstacles and best navigate them is precisely what my project will do.

Project Overview

This project provides a backed-by research rationale as to the importance of SEL as well as strategies to best meet the SEL needs of students in the high school alternative learning environment. It is presented using the Knowles andragogical framework for adult learning. The purpose of the project is to both educate professionals on SEL in the high school alternative setting as well as provide quick and effective strategies to implement on a daily basis.

Limitations to Project

The biggest limitation I see to this project are not knowing the background of each professional to which it is being presented. Some educators will have had lengthy experience in working in an alternative educational setting and may likely know some of this information. This was something I heavily considered when creating the project and debated whether or not to offer it differently depending upon experience. However, because new research comes out all the time, I decided that every educator and professional in the high school alternative environment would benefit from the project in its entirety. I also firmly believe in the importance of revisiting important topics regardless of whether or not it is new information.

Another limitation to this project is not being able to provide every detail of my research which I feel aids both to the understanding of the overall topic as well as the buy-in from educators. Because of the restriction of time and the importance of keeping engagement high, I had to pair it down to summarize much of the information.

Finally, while the research and rationale are crucial for teachers' understanding of SEL, there is no substitute for the experience of working with students. This is true for any pedagogical theory, but when it comes to understanding the SEL needs of students, it is all the more important to know what it looks like when students are lacking these specific skills. A student lacking SEL skills can look disruptive and withdrawn; if a teacher has not had much experience with this behavior, the likelihood of practicing empathy and patience may not be as high. Offering this information is imperative for educators to understand the purpose of developing SEL skills but it does not compare to the practice of building rapport with students to allow these strategies to take place.

Impact

The impact of this project is yet to be determined. However, because the process involves analysis of hard data in regards to attendance, grades, and behavior, the results will be apparent. The project also involves qualitative data in which educational professionals analyze potential growth among their students after implementation. Any time educators come together to analyze quantitative data is an opportunity for improvement and analyzing any potential recurring issues. In addition, the implementation of these strategies ensure a heightened focus on SEL which is the overall purpose of the project.

Chapter Four Summary

This chapter was a reflection of the creation of this capstone. It included setbacks and the ways in which they were handled as well as the areas that were successful. Chapter Four analyzed the literature review and the path that ultimately led to the decision to adopt three strategies from the UpCoaching Framework that guide students into solving their own problems. This chapter also included an overview of the project, saving the details of which for the appendices. Finally, Chapter Four discussed the potential limitations to the project as well as the possible impact it could offer.

Chapter Four has allowed for reflection not just on the capstone creation itself but for personal reflection. Analyzing things that went well, things that were challenging, and how those were navigated gave great insight into personal strengths and weaknesses. Creating this chapter has fueled a personal desire to continue to pursue inquiry and action research in educational practices. When you know better, you do better, and I am confident I will continue to practice both.

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